

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring President Konstandinos Stephanopoulos of Greece

May 9, 1996

Good evening. Ladies and gentlemen, President Stephanopoulos, Foreign Minister Pangalos, Education Minister Papandreou, members of the Greek delegation, to all of our distinguished guests from the United States and from Greece.

Hillary and I are delighted to welcome President Stephanopoulos to the White House. Mr. President, throughout your long career in public life, you have shown an extraordinary devotion to democracy and to serving the people of Greece. As a Member of Parliament as well as Minister for the Interior, Welfare, and State, you established a record of exceptional integrity and judgment. As President of the Hellenic Republic, you have represented Greece with dignity and wisdom, befitting the history of your great nation. Hillary and Chelsea were so warmly received by you and by all the Greek people recently. I thank you for that, and it now gives us very great pleasure to return the hospitality to you.

We are especially happy to have the President here at this particular point in the friendship between our two nations. Aristotle speaks at length about how friends strengthen one another by sharing virtues and characteristics. Well, Greece has turned to President Stephanopoulos for leadership, and I have my own Stephanopoulos. [Laughter] Mr. President, I think we're both doing pretty well.

Though thousands of miles separate our two nations, America has very deep roots in Greece. The evidence is all around us. Most of you came to dinner through the North Portico, built in Greek revival style during the Presidency of Andrew Jackson. Next door, the Treasury is the largest Greek revival building in the world. There are many other examples nearby. The Lincoln Memorial was originally modeled on the Parthenon. And the architecture we see outside is only the most visible expression of the values we share.

The earliest generations of our leaders who founded our traditions and built our institutions, as the President said earlier today, were deeply influenced by Greek thought, by the passion for truth and justice that had been handed down

from the ancients. They studied history's first democracy in the original Greek. I wish I were as well educated. Some were so moved by the struggle of modern Greece for independence that they left home to join in that distant fight for freedom. In 1824 Daniel Webster asked on the floor of the House of Representatives, "Does not the land ring from side to side with one common sentiment of sympathy for Greece?"

In this century, the relationship between our nations deepened as we fought together in two World Wars. Then the desire to help preserve freedom in Greece moved President Truman to stand firm against isolationism and for our post-war engagement abroad. His actions led to the Marshall plan, the establishment of NATO, and a half century of unparalleled success for democracy. We stood together in Korea and the Gulf war. We continue to work shoulder to shoulder today in the former Yugoslavia. Our alliance shows the truth of the Greek proverb: *Ou thaneeskee zeelos eleutherias*; the passion for freedom never dies.

Tonight we also thank Greece for the greatest of all gifts it has given us, wonderful Greek-Americans. Our society has been enriched beyond measure by them, whether an aria sung by Maria Callas, films by Elia Kazan, the brilliant tennis of Pete Sampras. In business, in the arts, in our public life, Greek-Americans have brought such energy and grace to the life of our Nation, and we are all profoundly grateful. In public life, we treasure men and women like Senator Sarbanes and Senator Snowe, former Governor Dukakis, and former Senator Paul Tsongas, people who have shown a deep dedication to serving the United States. And I know that all America is grateful to the more than one million Greek-Americans who have built our communities, our businesses, and our cities. Because of what they have done, America is a stronger and a greater nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us raise a glass to the great partnership between our nations, the heritage we share, and the Greek-American community that is one of our greatest blessings.

Zeeto ee Hellada, and God bless America.

May 9 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Foreign Minister

Theodoros Pangalos and Education Minister Yeoryios Papandreou of Greece, and Michael S. Dukakis, former Governor of Massachusetts.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy Football Team May 10, 1996

The President. Good morning. Secretary Widnall, to our distinguished military leaders: General Shalikashvili, General Moorman, General Stein, other distinguished military leaders here, members of the Board of Visitors of the Air Force Academy, Coach DeBerry, and the seniors from the Falcons football team. We gather together for another happy occasion; but for the United States and especially for members of our military family, this is a sad day, for early this morning, two Marine helicopters crashed at a massive training exercise at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

At this time, we know that 16 service members were killed and 2 others very seriously injured. Our hearts go out to the families, the friends, and the loved ones of those who lost their lives. Our prayers are with those who were injured for a speedy recovery.

Day-in and day-out, our service men and women put themselves on the line so that our country can remain free and secure. We ask so much of them, to travel far from home, to be apart from their loved ones, to do difficult and often dangerous work. One of the things I confess I did not fully appreciate until I became President was how dangerous the day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out work of our military, just training, just doing the defense of our country, is, and our citizens should know that.

The seniors here behind me will soon become the guardians of our liberty, just like those fine people who lost their lives last night. And though you have been very well prepared for the job you will do, you still must assume the risks of defending that liberty. Every American owes every one of you who will become an officer or a member of the United States military a tremendous debt of gratitude.

I'm happy to see all you here today. I'm beginning to wonder if I can make it interesting.

If you ever have really needed proof that we have a joint planning and operation and we're really building a joint culture in the United States military, we're going to give it today with General Shali congratulating the Air Force for another victory over the Army. *[Laughter]*

The friendly but fierce interservice rivalries should mean that almost anything can happen in competition, but at least lately, only one thing happens: The Air Force always wins. This is the 7th year in a row the Falcons have come to the White House to collect this prize. I hope the thrill isn't gone.

I understand this past November you actually lost the Commander in Chief's Trophy for a short time when there was a sneak attack masterminded by Army pranksters invading your field house before the game. Well, that didn't work, either. *[Laughter]* You played a great game this year against Army. I was especially impressed that you came back from a 14-point deficit to win decisively.

I've learned a little something about what it takes to overcome large deficits—*[laughter]*—and I was mightily impressed. I know there were other outstanding highlights of this year's season: beating Brigham Young's Cougars for the first time in a dozen tries, being cochampions of the Western Athletic Conference, going to the Copper Bowl. The Falcons had a very good year.

If the way you played is any indication of what is to come, coach, we expect to see the Air Force back here this time next year. I hope I'll be here to greet you. *[Laughter]* And I should note that, to the best of my knowledge, unlike me, you are not term-limited.

Finally, let me just say that I was most impressed by something that Coach DeBerry said earlier in the season. He said that through football the players on his team are helped to become better people. That is what we need more